LE BULLETIN
l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir Institute
NEWSLETTER

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WHY WE OPPOSE VOTES FOR MEN

1. Because man's place is in the army.
2. Because no really manly man wants to settle any question otherwise than by fighting about it.
3. Because if men should adopt peaceable methods women will no longer look up to them.
4. Because men will lose their charm if they step out of their natural sphére and interest themselves in other matters than feats of arms, uniforms and drums.
5. Because men are too emotional to vote. Their conduct at baseball games and political conventions shows this, while their innate tendency to appeal to force renders them particularly unfit for the task of government.

- Alice Duer Miller, 1915.

WIFE BATTERING: AN ACCEPTABLE FORM OF VIOLENCE?

The following is a résumé of a speech made by Mad. Céline Hervieux-Payette on September 24. 1980 at a conference on violence and violent crimes. Mad. Payette, a lawyer, is the Federal Liberal M.P. for the Mercier riding in Montreal and Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor-General, the Honourable Robert Kaplan. The complete text in French was published in the February-March issue of the Newsletter.

The frequency of wife-battering is so high that it takes precedence over other more spectacular crimes. Every year one married woman out of every ten (or 500,000 Canadian women) is a victim of ill-treatment by her husband. These figures may not even be accurate as our society is reluctant to accept that such ill-treatment is indeed a crime and not merely a private affair, the result of a simple family misunderstanding. Let me add that between 1961 and 1974, 60% of all homicides against women occurred within the family.

Our criminal code recognizes three categories of wife-battering: assault, aggravated assault and murder. The last two usually result in criminal charges being laid. That is not true, however, in cases of simple assault against wives. If a neighbour or a stranger assaults you, then the Crown will pursue the case. If your husband assaults you, and you lodge a complaint, the Crown is unlikely to do so. You will have to pursue the affair yourself, unless you are lucky enough to be a common-law wife.

The police are not trained to handle such cases and are also often reluctant to intervene because of the risk involved. On the one hand, they consider that such ill-treatment is not a crime; on the other they consider the circumstances to be dangerous enough to discourage their intervention.

Other aspects of our society encourage the isolation of such women. Doctors prescribe tranquillizers; others preach reconciliation. By and large, women remain with their husbands, secure in the knowledge that ill-treatment will re-occur. The problem affects the rich and the poor alike. Most women who leave their husbands experience difficulty in collecting any financial help from him for themselves or for their children.

This is not only a judicial problem. It is a moral, social and economic question, concerning civil rights, health and education. It involves all levels of government. The federal government has already announced its intention of modifying the Criminal Code and of developing adequate social services. The federal government has also sponsored innumerable research and pilot projects aimed at helping to eliminate the problem, a list of which is available.

Much remains to be done. We must all be aware of that. And if all else fails, in order to establish equality, we should ask half a million men to volunteer to be battered!

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RETURNING TO SCHOOL by Judy Carruthers

'A' For Effort

Afraid to go back to school? I should think you'd be terrified not to! I don't want to live on blood-money from my "ex" all my life - or until he gets fired, or quits or just stops paying...all of which will not be a worry in a few years anyway, when the kids become of age and I lose my "ticket"... and I'm left with ZILCH!!!...except welfare, or a dead-end job, or another marriage to keep me from starving or become a "bag lady".

You're afraid you won't be able to keep up...all those exam jitters and other horror stories...did you make it through child-birth, a rotten or at the very least a demanding marriage, a devastating or at the very least a painful divorce (or two)? Haven't you sat through the night at the local Children's Hospital Emergency drinking bad coffee and crying? What exam?

You want the truth? I'll give it to you, blow by blow. I'll tell you what really happened to me during the first year and half of my university career... after 15 years of being out of the system...the system that I flunked out of "royally", with the lowest marks that high school ever recorded. I'll tell you what you can expect, wha'll happen that you couldn't possibly predict by yourself and what won't happen.

What won't happen is that you won't get a lot of encouragement from your friends. What will happen is you'll get it from people you don't expect it from. Some folks will be downright hostile. (Think it's termed "jealousy.")

But maybe it's easier if I give you my story...a case history...from the very beginning. Actually, it all happened when I was about 33 years old, so that's half way through, but no matter. Not all that much good happened before anyway, so we'll just jump in at my second divorce. I don't need to describe that experience; just double the downer and you've got about the half of it. Thank God my second ex-husband believes in life after divorce for his wife and kids. We agreed to a deal...pay my way thorugh University and I will cut the support payments drastically and happily all by myself!!!

So, blow by blow, I promised you reality...here it is. The week I signed up for university, (after harassing the Guidance people to a frazzle with my insecurities and dumb questions) we had to move to a very cheap apartment. It was too noisy to cry yourself to sleep in, let along study, and the children were terrified of the local bullies. When the opportunity to take over and manage a coin wash came up I grabbed at it. It came with a cheap apartment upstairs...two whole floors to ramble around and and a fireplace! But things often are not what they seem are they? Did I even need to mention that? To avoid the risk of a law suit, suffice it to say, "Things didn't work out." I ended up on crutches the day the old boiler blew. To keep from getting a worse scalding, I had jumped out of the way and pulled an Achilles tendon. Exam week.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL cont'd....

We found a third place in 24 hours. I did. It's hard sometimes to stop saying "we". It was mid-winter, and friends came from all over to help us move into the brightest, cleanest, cheeriest place we've ever had..across from a park and run by a conscientious and human caretaker. I was even allowed to sign my own lease...in my own name! (I do live in Quebec, you see, so that's every unusual, especially if you live on child-support).

Thse were pretty major events weren't they? Moving three times in six months, during exams and on crutches, and what not. Interspersed, of course were the usual run of the mill "Mom" stuff...my son, the asthmatic, was recovering from an attack one night in the Observation Unit of the Montreal Children's Hospital. The doctor had just said we could leave. 3:00 a.m. My 2 year old daughter was deliriously exhausted. She tripped and fell, ending up in the Surgical Unit getting stitches in her head. The cat ate the hamster while we were gone. Oh, yeah, that was the night the big hockey game was on at the Forum and the streets were blocked off, and I had to go through the police barricades even to get to the hospital in the first place...with an irate fan spitting on my windshield for half a block. He was spread-eagled over the hood. But that doesn't really have much to do with University and Academia and tree-lined campuses and all that good stuff, so we'll forget about that. But it does fall into the fairly predictable category, at least for single Moms.

Lots of things are predictable. My old car died shortly after the hamster passed on, but thankfully we were able to scrounge up another one for $200.00. Thankfully for $200.00, because that's all that was left. The Government decided to turn down my application for a loan this year, negating any chance of receiving a bursary. That's kind of a funny story too. They gave me a loan last year, my first year, but this year...no deal. They said I made too much. They also said Alimony and Child-support were not considered income. I made $2000.00 less of whatever it is they don't call income than I did the year they did grace me with a Student Loan. (I never know where the extras will come from, like tuition, winter clothese, Christmas gifts. Funny, 'tho', when you are trying to help yourself, more than you'd ever imagine will be "provided". I pray a lot.) But there I go again, off on a tangent. Anyway, the car was a smaller one, and easier to drive, which was a great help when I had the big bulky burn dressing. Oh, I managed to come up with 1st, 2nd and 3rd degree burns to my chest and tummy from scalding milk, somewhere in there,...between term papers.

You can find the time. You can study through measles, burn dressings, crutches, moving days, broken-hearted dead love affairs and laundry days and still have enough energy to say a prayer of "thanks".

Thanks?

Thanks: You bet:

Thanks for not falling apart.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL cont'd....

Thanks for the pride in your kids' eyes when you flash your 1st "A". (Oh, kids...you won't have a lot of time for them although you,ll have more time than if you worked in a dead-end 9-5 job and came home depressed, discouraged and dragged out instead of just tired but alive from school. A funny thing happened too...my son's marks sky-rocketed, my daughter blossomed in day care and now becomes livid if disturbed during her study time (colouring book).

Thanks for that!

Thanks for the chance of a real future...independent, vibrant and challenging.

Thanks for the opportunity of gaining the tools to meet that challenge.

Thanks, God...for helping me to maintain an "A" average in full-time Honours English.

Thanks, God...for a new life.

P.S. If you are still married and therefore have help with babysitting, dishes, meals, housework and measles, what on earth are you waiting for?

PPS - If you're a man reading this, married or other, think about your future, and/or your wife's...and/or your ex-wife's...and your childrens'. There really is no excuse.

I haven't left you even a one...

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"I'll not listen to reason...Reason always means what someone else has got to say."

Mrs. Gaskell, Crawford

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"A single woman with a narrow income must be a ridiculous old maid, the proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman of good fortune is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else."

Jane Austen, Emma

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LES FEMMES SOVIÉTIQUES

Qui est Tatiana Mamonova? Peintre, poète, fondatrice de l'Amanach des femmes, dont le quatrième numéro vient de sortir en Union soviétique, Tatiana est une dissidente qui a été expulsée de son pays natal en 1980 pour avoir voulu améliorer le sort des femmes.

Habitant Paris, invitée au Canada pour le huit mars par un groupe de femmes dans les province maritimes, elle a pu, grâce aux efforts de nombreuses autres femmes, entreprendre une tournée dans d'autres villes pour nous faire part des conditions et des luttes des femmes russes.

Le mardi 24 et le mercredi 25 mars 1981, le public de Montréal a eu le plaisir de l'entendre à l'Université McGill. Sa conférence de mardi a eu lieu dans des circonstances difficiles. La grève des chargés de cours à l'UQAM ayant obligé les organisatrices à changer de lieu à la dernière minute, c'est dans un immense salle au plafond haut, à l'acoustique insuffisante, que nous nous sommes réuni/e/s pour l'entendre. Comme elle ne parle pas le français, ou très peu, elle s'est adressée à nous en russe, et après chaque phrase il a fallu attendre la traduction. L'interprète, Josée, a fourni un travail héroïque mais il lui était difficile, comme il l'aurait sans doute été pour tout autre personne, de capter et transmettre au pied levé toutes les nuances et surtout tout l'humour de notre conférencière. Mais l'amitié régnait et c'est dans une atmosphère dans l'ensemble harmonieuse que tout s'est déroulé.

Tatiana n'a pas lu de texte préparé. Au contraire, ses première paroles ont été provoquées par une feuille qui avait été distribuée sur les lieux par le Parti communiste du Québec, feuille qui brosse un tableau idyllique de la situation des femmes soviétiques et incite les Québécois (mais non les Québécois/es)à étendre leur solidarité plutôt envers les femmes d'Afrique, de l'Amérique latine, etc. (comme si l'un empêchait l'autre!).

Tatiana dénonce le mythe du plein emploi en Union soviétique, indiquant non seulement qu'il y a d'innombrables personnes qui ne trouvent pas un travail qui correspond à leur niveau d'éducation, mais aussi que celles et ceux qui ne trouvent pas de travail du tout sont déclaré/e/s parasites et finissent ainsi avec du "travail" forcé dans les camps. Quant à la profession de médecine, où effectivement les femmes sont plus nombreuses que les hommes, elle est tellement dévaluée, peut-être à cause de cela, que les médecins ne se considèrent plus que comme des techniciens.

L'avortement libre et gratuit? Il l'est, dit-elle, si l'on dispose de trente roubles, mais si l'on en dispose, il est préférable d'aller du côté clandestin, car l'avortement officiel se pratique sans anesthésie et dans des conditions d'hygiène lamentables. C'est en arrivant à Paris qu'elle a entendu parler pour la première fois de la méthode du vacuum! Mais l'avortement se pratique beaucoup quand-même, jusqu'à quinze fois dans la vie d'une femme, car les méthodes anti-conceptionnelles restent très primitives et cachées.

Toujours en réaction contre la feuille, elle dénonce le chauvinisme non seulement des hommes russes mais aussi de tout l'appareil soviétique, qui se contente de quelques femmes-alibi mais fait taire les autres. Elle rappelle que la Contre-révolution a commencé avec Staline.

LES FEMMES SOVIÉTIQUES cont....

Elle a répondu ensuite à toutes les quesions posées, toujours avec patience, souvent avec ironie. Celles-ci portaient sur sa vie privée et professionnelle, sur ses moyens de subsistence, sur les syndicats libres (mal vus), sur l'homosexualité (comment peut-on être homosexuel/le dans un pays socialiste?), sur la religion (il fallait que l'Almanach soit pluraliste), sur les liens entre le socialisme et le féminisme (je fais maintenant du féminisme ma seule politique).

La tâche qu'elle a entreprise, tâche primordiale pour elle, c'est la création d'une Internationale des femmes, pour créer une solidarité entre femmes à travers le monde, pour venir en aide à toutes celles qui sont opprimées là où elles se trouvent. Seul un mouvement de ce genre peut sortir les femmes de leur condition actuelle. Elle s'y est déjà attelée, avec des résultats prometteurs.

Merci Tatiana. Merci à toutes celles qui sont restées là-bas. Bon courage.

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UNE INSERTION DANS LE MONDE par Mair Verthuy

C'est à l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir que reviennent le privilège et l'honneur de marrainer le premier colloque international en recherche et enseignement relatifs à la femme qui aura lieu à l'Université Concordia sous notre égide de 26 juillet au 4 août 1982.

Ce projet de colloque résulte de trois influences convergentes. Au printemps 1979, pendant des discussions officieuses que j'ai eues avec des membres du secrétariat de l'UNESCO, il fut proposé par celles-ci que l'Institut, à cause de son histoire et de sa situation géographique, serait plus apte que quiconque à prendre une telle initiative. C'est à la suite de cette suggestion que nous avons organisé en juin 1980 notre colloque national en études de femme afin d'acquérir l'expérience pertinente.

En février 1980, c'est à l'Institut que s'adressa l'UNESCO pour un compte-rendu de la recherche et l'enseignement relatifs à la femme dans les universités et collèges canadiens. L'UNESCO m'invita ensuite à une réunion d'expertes dans ce domaine (douze femmes des différentes régions géo-politiques du monde), rencontre qui avait pour but de présenter une série de recommandations à l'UNESCO. L'UNESCO reconnaissait ainsi pour la première fois l'existence et l'importance de ce nouveau domaine d'études. Nous en avons déjà parlé à l'intérieur d'un numéro précédent du Bulletin.

UNE INSERTION DANS LE MONDE cont....

Sous sa forme actuelle, cependant, le colloque fait directement suite aux séminaires et tables rondesinternationaux en études de la femme qui eurent lieu au forum ONG pendant la conference mondiale des Nations-Unies sur la femme à Copenhague en juillet 1980 et que l'Institut aida à organiser. Les personnes qui ont participé aux séminaires de Copenhague ont clairement manifesté leur désir de trouver un mécanisms qui permette des échanges ultérieurs et qui facilite l'établissement d'un réseau de communication sur une base permanente. Lors de la séance finale, quand j'ai introduit l'idée d'un colloque international à Montréal, cette idée fut acceuillie avec enthousiasme par une grande majorité des déléguées.

Nous souhaitons donc mener à bien ce projet, qui non seulement correspondra à un besoin international clairement exprimé, mais aussi agira comme catalyseur pour les études de la femme chez nous.

Le colloque a comme objectifs de:

- offrir un lieu de débats et d'échanges sur la recherche, l'enseignement et autres activités connexes relatifs à la femme;
- fortifier les jeunes centres de recherche ou d'enseignement de par le monde;
- reconnaître et faire valoir la contribution faite par la recherche et l'enseignement relatifs à la femme au développement socio-économique;
- faciliter la mise sur pied d'une association internationale pour encourager la solidarité entre les divers centres et régions ainsi que la dissémination de l'information.

Ce colloque offrira aux professeur/e/s et étudiant/e/s de l'Institut une occasion sans doute unique non seulement de participer à l'organisation d'un projet international de grande envergure, mais aussi de travailler étroitement avec des femmes venues du monde entier. Il nous faut en profiter pour élargir notre champ de connaissances, pour mieux saisir la spécificité des femmes dans les différentes régions et cultures, et partant de la nôtre.

Pour l'instant, l'Institut sollicite les fonds nécessaires, auprès des grandes fondations internationales, des gouvernements, de l'UNESCO, de l'entreprise privée. Nous avons également envoyé des lettres à environ 70 centres de recherches sur la femme de par le monde pour avoir plus de renseignements sur leurs activités, et solliciter des suggestions quant au contenu de notre colloque. Nous espérons ainsi assurer la plus grande participation possible de la part de nos soeurs ailleurs.

Dès la rentrée, il y aura beaucoup de travail à faire pour que le projet réussisse. Nous espérons pouvoir compter sur vous, vos idées, votre aide. Vous pouvez vous informer de nos activités auprès de Susan Stewart à l'Institut sur le campus Sir George Williams - 879-8521.

DALILA ZEGHAR MASCHINO

Members of the Institute will have been pleased to learn that Dalila is once again free and in Canada nearly three years after her kidnapping. You will also be pleased to know that she specifically requested that her press conference, timed to coincide with International Women's Day, be sponsored by the Institute.

DALILA ZEGHAR MASCHINO

Les membres de l'Institut auront appris avec plaisir l'évasion de Dalila et sa présence parmi nous à Montréal. Il vous fera également plaisir, je pense, d'apprendre que c'est Dalila elle-même qui a demandé que sa conférence de presse, qui devait coïncider avec la Journée internationale de la femme, soit marrainée par l'Institut.

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Co-editors/Co-rédactrices: Rytsa Tobia
Claudette Branchard

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* Nous encourageons vivement les personnes intéressées à recevoir le Bulletin à s'abonner, car il nous est de plus en plus difficile de maintenir ce service gratuitement. Veuillez nous appeler ou nous écrire pour avoir des renseignements sur les Ami/e/s de l'Institut.

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TWO NATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

by Mair Verthuy

This year, the Institute sent delegates to the annual meetings of the two most important national women's organisations in Canada: CRIAW (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women) and NAC (the National Action Committee for the Status of Women). As the names indicate, the two have very different functions, although the long range goals are the same. The Institute is a member of both.

The CRIAW conference, which took place in Toronto in November 1980, was devoted to the topic: Women and Power. It is perhaps interesting to note that the timing itself of the event suggests our real powerlessness, since it took place during a weekend. Most business conferences--male--are scheduled for weekdays, as if men feel freer than we do to take time off from their work to attend them.

It was an interesting weekend, punctuated by informal get-togethers and visits to the Turner exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario. The keynote speaker was David MacDonald, former Federal Minister responsible for the Status of Women in the short-lived Conservative government. His speech showed little comprehension of the needs of women and was extremely ill-received.

Probably the most fruitful events were the workshops that took place on Saturday and on Sunday morning, and where small groups of women and some men could come to grips with serious issues. A list of these is appended.* Françoise d'Eaubonne, the French eco-feminist, who was a guest of the Institute in November and attended the conference with us, aroused a great deal of interest and was invited to address one of the groups.

The workshops that I enjoyed most, or learned most from, concerned health and safety in the work-place and non-traditional jobs. In the health and safety areas, for instance, one notes not only the lack of progress in eliminating certain well-known occupational hazards but also the advent of new illnesses related to new technology, as in the use of word processors, which provoke eyestrain and produce various stress related symptoms. Equally, one learned to be more prudent on the subject of such apparently progressive ideas as flexible working hours, which necessarily mean, for instance, that visits to the doctor, dentist, etc., must be made on the worker's own time and not on that of the employer.

The outlook for women in the non-traditional areas is both bleak and encouraging. Bleak, because little seems to be happening on the official scene. Job-training programmes are still few and far between. Where women have been hired, their positions are far from secure because of increasing unemployment. As more and more lay-offs occur, the women are the first to go, on the old 'last hired, first fired' principle, apparently so dear to our unions (male-dominated). On the other hand, a new spirit of entrepreneurship seems to be growing among women, and there were several spokeswomen there to tell us about the excitement of setting up business for oneself. This is certainly not the answer for the total population, but it does reflect the dynamic spirit which is developing.

The last session included a workshop at which representatives of the three major political parties spoke to us on the subject of access to power. This is

a very controversial issue, as many women believe we should shun conventional power structures which they perceive to be inherently bad. Others, as is the case with the three speakers, believe that it is important to infiltrate the system and transform it from within.

Readers may be interested to know that the Liberal representative, Madame Céline Hervieux-Payette, M.P. for Mercier riding in Montreal, when asked what sources of information she used to learn about the problems of women in Québec, replied that she consulted La Fédération des femmes du Québec and the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, whose Newsletter she regularly reads! You will note that she has also generously allowed us to reprint her speech on wife-battering.

The NAC conference (Ottawa, March 1981) was a very different affair. NAC is essentially a lobby group, indeed the most important women's lobby in Canada. In other words, its function is to produce resolutions and put pressure on the government, indeed all political parties, in order to influence public policy as it affects women. The conference always ends with a meeting between representatives of NAC and federal M.P.s (a lobby), although this is not, of course, the only meeting to take place during the year.

At this recent conference, many delegates were preoccupied by the brouhaha surrounding the federal Consultative Committee on the Status of Women and the role of Lloyd Axworthy. Opinions were divided on how best to proceed. Some felt that too much time and energy had already been expended on it; others believed that although an external review of the Council is necessary, we should not attack other women; still more, a majority of those still present to vote on Sunday evening, argued that not only Lloyd Axworthy, but also the members of the executive of the Council should resign. This provoked a rift in the ranks, less because of the content of the resolutions voted on than because of the procedures, or lack thereof, used to reach them.

Perhaps I should explain here how the convention operates. After the opening session on Friday evening, Saturday is devoted to official workshops, each of which may vote on a series of resolutions to be presented to the total membership on Sunday. The resolutions concerning the Council emanated from an unofficial workshop, which many did not attend, as they did not expect it to produce recommendations for the Sunday meeting. There was, therefore, a great deal of protest when in fact such resolutions were forthcoming. A significant number of delegates expressed concern over this deviation from accepted procedure, and indeed La Fédération des femmes du Québec (a 26,000 strong organisation) not only walked out of the convention but also withdrew its membership from NAC, leaving Québec seriously underrepresented in what is supposed to be a national organisation.

Another rift had occurred earlier in the day over the question of funding. NAC receives most of its operating budget from the federal government. The outgoing president, Lynn McDonald, and many others believe that it is inappropriate for an organisation which is set up to lobby the government to receive money from it. Others, including the current president, Jean Woods, and an earlier president, Kay McPherson, point out that government money is our money and that we should not think that anyone is doing us a favour by returning some of it to us. Various arguments were made to support both sides, and a vote was taken. Since the vote was tied and since Lynn was clearly not impartial (the motion had originally been made by her), it was decided to proceed to a recount. Unfortunately, approximately a dozen more votes were cast in the recount than in the original vote, making

it a new vote and not a recount. The chairwoman nevertheless decided to allow it to stand, thereby generating a great deal of dissatisfaction, again on the procedural issue.

It was then with a feeling of depression that one left the NAC conference, which turned out to be a house divided against itself at a time when women need to unite their forces. The media were only too happy to report on these divisions and so undermine the credibility of the organisation. I certainly felt from the beginning of the weekend that many women were busier mistrusting and directing their energies against other women than finding more efficient ways to fight the common enemy. It is all too reminiscent of the infighting among the Left, and one can only hope that it will be overcome.

On a lighter note, however, and one unreported by the media, NAC decided this year to offer its first Pacifier of the Year (Tétine de l'année) award to the man who most distinguished himself by his sexist remarks. The winner of this super pacifier was Senator Harry Hays, who wondered out loud at a lobby who was looking after the children while the women were all out! Runner-up was naturally Lloyd Axworthy.

Information on CRIAW and NAC is available at the Institute on the Sir George Williams Campus.

* List of CRIAW Workshops

Saturday, November 15		samedi, le 15 novembre
9:30-12:30	WOMEN AND POWER: EFFECTS OF POWERLESSNESS	LA FEMME ET LE POUVOIR: LES EFFETS DE SON EXCLUSION
Session I/Atelier I	Session II/Atelier II	Session III/Atelier III
Sexual Harrassment/ Harcèlement sexuel	Medical Abuse/ Abus de la médecine	Violence and Abuse/ Violence et abus
2:00-5:00	WOMEN AND POWER: ECONOMICS	LA FEMME ET LE POUVOIR: L'ECONOMIE POLITIQUE
Session I/Atelier I	Session II/Atelier II	Session III/Atelier III
The Money Economy/ L'économie monétaire	The Non-Money Economy/ L'économie non-monétaire	New Approaches/ Nouvelles approches

Sunday, November 16		
1:30-4:30	WOMEN AND POWER: POLITICS	LA FEMME ET LE POUVOIR: LA POLITIQUE
Session I/Atelier I	Session II/Atelier II	Session III/Atelier III
Women inside the existing political structure/La femme à l'interieur des structures politiques actuelles	Women as Lobbyists/ La femme dans des groupes de pression	Women in Alternative Structures/ La femme et les structures de rechange

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

In the summer of 1982, the Simone de Beauvoir Institute will be hosting the first International Conference on Teaching and Research relating to Women. It is to take place at Concordia University on the Sir George Williams Campus from July 26 to August 4, 1982.

Between now and then, there's a lot to be done. At the moment the Institute is in the process of obtaining the necessary funding from various sources, including major international foundations, governmental agencies, UNESCO, and private enterprise. We have also sent letters of general information and enquiry to about 70 research centres world-wide to tell them about the Conference and ask them about their activities and concerns; because we hope to make a valid contribution to a globally-held pool of knowledge, we are inviting the suggestions of our counterparts in other regions regarding the content and subject of Conference meetings.

In its present form, the Conference has grown out of the seminars and round-table discussions of the NGO Forum during the UN World Conference on Women at Copenhagen in July 1980, of which the Institute was one of the organizers. Participants in the Copenhagen Seminars indicated clearly that they wished to find a mechanism for further exchanges and for some form of networking to establish communication on a permanent basis. A great majority welcomed the idea of a follow-up conference to pursue this objective.

We hope, through the Conference we are planning to provide an adequate response to this clearly-expressed international need, while at the same time providing a catalyst for Women's Studies in our own country.

The objectives of the Conference will be:

- to provide an international forum for discussions and exchanges on teaching, research and associated issues relating to women;
- to reinforce newly-created women's studies groups and research centres throughout the world;
- to recognize and enhance the contribution of teaching and research on women to social and economic development;
- to facilitate the establishment of an International Association to encourage mutual support and the sharing of information.

Through the Conference, the Institute's teachers and students will be given a rare opportunity to work with women from all over the world on a project of major proportions and scope. We should make the best use of this chance in increasing the extent of our knowledge, learning about the specific situations of women from other regions and cultures, and applying this fresh appreciation to an examination of our own problems.

Once the academic year gets underway the pace will be picking up. We hope to be able to count on you, your ideas, and your aid in making this project work. You can find out more about our plans from Sue Stewart at the SGW Institute.

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER cont'd

G O O D N E W S ! !

The Institute has already received the following grants for the Conference:

Concordia University	$ 7,500
Social Services & Humanities Research Council (Ottawa)	$10,000
Formation de chercheurs et d'action concertée (Québec)	$10,000
Ford Foundation	$25,000 U.S.

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On Thursday, March 26, approximately one hundred people came to see a movie dealing with the production of Judy Chicago's feminist art exhibit; The Dinner Party. This showing of the film - Written out of History - was sponsored by the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, as a service to the Montreal community. The Dinner Party was put together by Judy Chicago with the help of over four hundred volunteers. It took four years, and required mistress craftswomen (and men) in embroidery, tapestry, wood work, as well as pottery and china painting. The work honours thirteen women, who for the most part have been written out of history. So that Chicago's work is not only a work of art, but also an attempt at feminist herstory.

Following the screening of the film, two students who are in the Fine Arts Faculty and also interested in feminist analysis, spoke briefly about aspects of Judy Chicago's work. Lorrie Beavis spoke about Judy Chicago's next project, which will deal with birth, and Jane Hope discussed Chicago's background and development as a feminist artist. A short discussion with members of the audience followed.

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LA LOI NE SUFFIT PAS de Lili Fainaru

Le vendredi 6 mars à l'Université Concordia, nous avons eu le plaisir de recevoir Odile Dhavernas, avocate à Paris, professeure de droit, auteure, invitée par l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir.

Sa conférence, claire, précise, bien documentée, avait pour but de nous informer sur la lutte des femmes françaises pour l'obtention des droits par une réforme des institutions juridiques et d'en faire le bilan. Elle rappelle quelques faits historiques:

- la lutte des femmes organisée sous la Révolution française qui se solde par l'interdiction de participer aux réunions;
- la formation, autour de la révolution de 1830, de quelques groupes de femmes qui sont vite engloutis par les remous sociaux;
- la vogue des congrès féministes à la fin du siècle dernier qui demandaient -- sans succès-- l'égalité dans la famille, l'accès à l'éducation, l'égalité juridique;
- l'obtention du droit de vote en 1944, sans lutte préalable, parce que cela arrangeait les pouvoirs en place.

Ensuite elle s'adresse surtout aux questions concernant le droit de la femme de disposer de son corps. Après la deuxième guerre mondiale, les Françaises connurent une période de répression dans ce domaine, la France (les hommes?) avec ses besoins démographiques ayant introduit une forte politique de natalité. C'est en 1967 seulement qu'on permettra aux femmes d'avoir accès à la contraception et cela dans des circonstances difficiles: manque d'informations, réticences des médecins, etc.

Pour l'avortement, il y a, à cette même période, les "faiseuses d'ange" et autres procédés dangereux employés en désespoir de cause. La lutte s'intensifie, bien sûr. Des groupes d'aide, des voyages en Angleterre, manifeste des "343 salopes" (des femmes telle Simone de Beauvoir qui ont avoué s'être fait avorter afin de montrer l'impuissance des autorités -- le nom "salopes" leur est accolé par un "monsieur" -- elles l'ont gardé!).

Puis en 1974 vient la victoire partielle. L'avortement sur la seule demande de la femme est légalisée -- pour celles qui ont les moyens de se le payer et/ou qui connaissent un hôpital où l'on veut bien le pratiquer. C'est là qu'Odile souligne l'inefficacité de la loi, car si la loi l'autorise, elle n'oblige ni les médecins ni les hôpitaux à offrir ce service. Au contraire, le gouvernement coupe les crédits aux hôpitaux et ne fournit nullement l'argent nécessaire à l'embauche d'un personnel qualifié. Par ailleurs, cette légalisation a accru les pouvoirs des hommes sur notre corps puisque les cliniques plus ou moins contrôlées par des femmes compétentes ont du coup disparu. Il en résulte que les voyages organisés en Angleterre ont repris.

Elle veut donce nous mettre en garde contre une confiance trop aveugle dans la loi en tant que système. Souvent celle-ci n'accorde que des victoires apparentes, qui désamorcent la lutte et nous font reculer.

LA LOI NE SUFFIT PAS cont....

Non pas qu'elle soit contre les changements à la loi. Ils sont nécessaires mais doivent s'accompagner d'une très grande vigilance.

Elle nous parle ensuite du viol. De plus en plus en France, les femmes changent de mentalité, ne se sentent plus coupables, luttent, demandent droit et justice. Nous avons appris avec intérêt que ce n'est pas considéré là comme un crime, qu'il tombe sous la rubrique "coups et blessures". La victime est néanmoins passible d'une enquête policière quant à son passé sexuel ou social, ce qui n'étonnera personne. La cour peut également demander une expertise psychiatrique pour évaluer le préjudice! Les Françaises cherchent donc à modifier le code pour transformer le viol en crime, alors que le mouvement inverse s'établit ici, les femmes étant d'avis qu'il sera plus facile d'établir la culpabilité si la peine à laquelle le violeur est condamné n'est pas trop forte. Il faut tenir compte de la solidarité masculine!

Odile Dhavernas réitère son mot d'ordre: vigilance. Après une période de questions, nous nous sommes toutes et tous rendu/e/s au salon de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir pour continuer la discussion autour d'une bonne tasse de café. C'était au tour de Mair Verthuy d'être "sur la sellette" mais elle a gentiment répondu à toutes les questions posées sur le fonctionnement des programmes de "Women's Studies" (les études de la femme).

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GETTING YOUR FINANCIAL ACT TOGETHER IN THE SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE

by Holly Haimerl (reproduced with the permission of The Thursday Report)

Women are not being taught to "play the money game," says Amanda Goodwin, a life underwriter at Prudential. Without this vital information, their chances of enjoying their retirement years in comfort are very slim.

Goodwin, who conducted "Money Wisdom for Women", a two-day workshop at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, is concerned that many women don't know how to plan for ten years from now, let alone for age 65.

If they are married they are content to trust their husbands to provide for their financial needs.

"Even when a married woman works, her income usually goes for the extras, like an allowance," says Goodwin. If they have their own credit rating, she added, they're lucky.

Goodwin is determined to change women's attitudes toward their own financial destinies. Most of her free time is devoted to animating money management workshops and information sessions solely for women, at schools and community centres around Montreal.

Since re-entering the business world five years ago after a ten-year hiatus raising her two children, Goodwin has earned her accreditation as a life underwriter and will have completed requirements to become a chartered life underwriter, the "PhD of life insurance", within the next few months.

"People who set goals succeed," emphasized Goodwin. "You only get somewhere by planning what it is you want to achieve."

The best way to learn is by doing, so the dozen women at the sessions were asked to write down what they wanted to have, do or be, ten years from now. Priorities among the group ranged from a new car or house to complete financial independence.

Using a few of the women as examples, Goodwin showed how they could realistically map out their goals in terms of the time, effort and money needed to achieve them.

"To put actual dates down really jars you," says Goodwin. "It's like putting a tombstone in front of your house the year you're going to die. It makes you realize how many things you want to do before then."

After showing the women how to estimate their net monetary worth in terms of their assets and liabilities, and how to chart a budget out in separate categories of "fixed", "flexible", and "fun" spending, Goodwin demonstrated the importance of building a "savings pyramid".

"There are only two sources of income," she says. "People at work and money at work."

"Saving is more than storing money. As a rule of thumb, a good savings base is at least three or four months of your net monthly salary."

This amount can be kept in the bank so as to be readily available in case of emergencies. Anything above this amount should be channelled into protection for your income through insurance or other investments.

Goodwin advises "taking your risks in layers", working your way up the pyramid from investment in property, to savings bonds, stocks and finally, speculation.

But before you invest, you need a solid foundation of income, savings and protection.

Holly Haimerl is a third-year journalism student.

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N E W S F L A S H

Members of the Institute are currently taping for the television programme Magazine-express of Radio-Canada five episodes on women's issues to be broadcast coast-to-coast on the French network in the Fall. Paths to glory! Dates will be provided later.

B R È V E S N O U V E L L E S

Des membres de l'Institut enregistrent actuellement pour le programme Magazine-express de Radio-Canada une série de cinq émissions sur les femmes à être diffusée à l'automne. Enfin la gloire! Vous connaîtrez les dates plus tard.

MEDIAEVAL WOMEN POETS

Alais, Iselda et Carenza: Nous ne savons rien des trois femmes ici citées. Le poème présente un curieux mélange de langage familier et de langage religieux, avec nombre d'obscurités.

Madame Carenza au beau corps avenant
donnez conseil aux deux soeurs que nous sommes,
et puisque vous savez mieux choisir le meilleur
conseillez-moi selon votre expérience:
Dois-je prendre un mari de notre connaissance?
ou demeurer pucelle? C'est là ce qui m'agrée;
car je n'estime pas qu'il soit bon d'enfanter.
Mais être sans mari me paraît une épreuve.

Madame Carenza, prendre mari m'agrée,
mais je pense qu'enfanter est grande pénitence,
car les tétons alors pendillent...
lourd et dolent devient le ventre...
Dame Alais, Dame Iselda, éducation,
valeur, beauté, et jeunesse et fraîches couleurs,
je vous vois de cela pourvues (comme de courtoisie et
comme de mérite)
mieux que toute autre dame instruite.
Je vous conseille donc, pour de bonnes semailles,
de prendre pour mari le Couronné de Science,
par qui, en fait de fruit, aurez fils glorieux:
Celle-là qu'il épouse, il la garde pucelle.

Dame Alais, Dame Iselda, conservez de moi souvenance
à l'ombre de l'abri divin.
Et quand vous y serez, priez le glorieux
qu'à l'heure du partir près de vous il me garde...*

* Il s'agit peut-être d'un nom cathare ou gnostique du Christ. En tout cas, le propos semblerait vouloir dire que le mariage avec Dieu "Couronné de Science" est plus souhaitable qu'un mariage avec un homme. Ces lignes sont suffisamment hermétiques pour être du"trobar clus."

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QUEEN ELIZABETH I (1533-1603)

The Doubt of Future Foes

The doubt of future foes exiles my present joy,
And wit me warns to shun such snares as threaten mine annoy;
For falsehood now doth flow, and subjects' faith doth ebb,
Which should not be if reason ruled or wisdom weaved the web.
But clouds of joys untried do cloak aspiring minds,
Which turn to rain of late repent by changed course of winds.
The top of hope supposed the root upreared shall be,
And fruitless all their grafted guile, as shortly ye shall see.
The dazzled eyes with pride, which great ambition blinds,
Shall be unsealed by worthy wights whose foresight falsehood finds.
The daughter of debate that discord aye doth sow
Shall reap no gain where former rule still peace hath taught to know.
No foreign banished wight shall anchor in this port;
Our realm brooks not seditious sects, let them elsewhere resort.
My rusty sword through rest shall first his edge employ
To poll their tops that seek such change or gape for future joy.

RENCONTRE AVEC SUZANNE JACOB par Nicole Gélinas

Suzanne Jacob est une femme qui dit les choses comme elle sent le besoin de les dire. C'est un être prêt à tout pour vivre librement sa vie de femme.

Elle débute à Nicolet comme comédienne et metteure en scène, puis se joint à la troupe, les Apprentis-Sorciers. Par la suite elle devient professeure de français, langue seconde.

On connaît d'abord Suzanne Jacob comme chanteuse: on se souvient qu'en 1970, elle obtient le prix du meilleure auteur-compositeur-interprète, décerné par le Patriote et représent le Québec à SPA en Belgique. Elle écrit son premier roman Flore Cocon en 1978 publié par Parti Pris et en 1979 un recueil de nouvelles, La Survie, publié cette fois par la maison d'édition le Biocreux dont elle (avec Paul Paré) est la fondatrice. En 1980 elle nous présente son premier recueil de poésie Poèmes 1 (Gémmellaires et Le chemin de Damas). Sa forme d'écriture est importante parce qu'elle laisse au lecteur une place originale, et lui permet de devenir créateur.

Suzanne Jacob, lors de notre rencontre à l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir, me disait que le personnage de Flore dans son roman Flore Cocon n'est pas le fruit de son engagement féminin, mais plutôt une sorte de rencontre entre l'extérieur et l'intérieur d'elle-même, une provocation, une séduction par un personnage qui s'est inventé à son contact. Suzanne Jacob veut nous présenter à travers le personnage de Flore une femme qui est sans mensonge; "le mensonge, l'organisation sociale dans laquelle on s'insère, mon personnage la refuse."

Le désir de Suzanne Jacob c'est justement de voir "des femmes qui sont en dehors des pièges de la discussion, des pièges d'une forme d'action toujours pleine de promiscuité." Et c'est à travers le thème de l'homosexualité de Flore Cocon que l'on peut comprendre la pensée revendicatrice de Suzanne Jacob. Le droit de l'humain à la pleine possession de ses désirs, de ses passions et de ses idées.

L'homosexualité que vit Flore est en dehors de la "définition de l'homosexualité", ne peut se comprendre à l'intérieur des idées reçues. Flore n'aborde pas sa relation avec Louanne dans ce cadre, comme aucune de ses relations "n'entre dans le cadre d'une définition." Flore ne veut pas qu'on fasse de sa relation un système car elle n'a pas besoin de système pour se justifier. Elle est en état de désir; dès qu'elle sent qu'il y a une sorte d'emprise qui veut la réduire, elle s'en va, elle part.

Suzanne Jacob refuse la perpétuation des systèmes: "on meurt dans le système. Depuis qu'il y a un espèce de système qui part du fait que toute femme serait dans le fond homosexuelle, il est alors difficile d'avoir des relations et je ne peux plus alors toucher à une femme sans rendre des comptes, car le système me demande des comptes: à savoir, est-ce que c'est logique si je suis en dehors de la logique de l'homosexualité? On va me refuser de vivre cet amour parce que c'est pas logique, ce qui amène alors à avoir des relations ennuyantes."

Elle déplore que la systématique de la jouissance empêche d'aller dans toutes sortes de directions. Le propre du système, dira-t-elle est "d'inventer du mensonge."

RENCONTRE AVEC SUZANNE JACOB cont....

Suzanne Jacob est avant tout une écrivaine de vérité. C'est le combat d'écrire la vie en essayant de trouver une route où l'on pourrait entrer dans les champs sans affranchir la lourdeur des systèmes. Elle dira: "Enfin il ne faut jamais rester tranquille dans une forme, s'il y a combat, c'est celui-là que je fais."

Suzanne Jacob est une femme qui dévore la vie. Il faut lire ses livres et aller l'entendre chanter pour découvrir son honnêteté et son humour. Tout est chez elle vivant et vigoureux, elle rit, elle fait rire. Elle a simplement choisi de vivre et de "marcher".

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NI L'HERBE NI LA NEIGE

Ni l'herbe ni la neige
ne m'ont enseigné leurs pièges.
De l'herbe ou de la neige à ma peau
pas de taie même si mince
Un même souffle sans heurt.

Je me croyais en toi comme j'avais été en elles.
Vallonnée, lumineuse et sans mot.
J'ai appris de toi la trappe la fosse
le noeud le collet la bascule
et les mots.

Faillait-il rester muette?

Poème de Suzanne Jacob
extrait du "Chemin de damas"
du recueil Poèmes I.
Ed. Le Biocreux 1980

SOVIET FEMINISM

Tatiana Mamanova spoke on Wednesday, March 25, 1981 at McGill, about the situation of women in the USSR. Responding mainly to questions from the floor. she related her attempts to organize the feminist movement there and her subsequent forced exile from the USSR in June 1980. Speaking through an interpreter, Tatiana showed a great sense of humour in many of her answers. Asked how the Soviet government looks upon the questions raised by feminists in their country. she replied, "The answer given by authorities is simple: there is no need for feminism in the USSR because we have socialism."

Another point raised by several members of the audience dealt with the relationship between feminist and other dissident groups in the USSR. According to Tatiana, most of the members of dissident groups showed little interest in the activities of the feminists, suggesting that the women's concerns were trivial compared to their own. Apparently the one exception was Andrei Sakarov, who had written to Tatiana of his support for the feminist cause.

A question about lesbianism in the USSR, opened another important area of discussion. Tatiana pointed out that one way to dismiss an issue. is to simply not give it a name. So that in Russian there is no word for either lesbians or feminists. Thus, in order to promote the feminist movement in the USSR. the women there desperately need books and other sources of information from the West. A committee has been set-up in Montreal, to help Tatiana provide this information to the women in the USSR. For more information contact:

Comité Mamanova Committee
4844 Park Ave.
Montreal, Quebec
H2V 4B5

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LA LOI 89: UN NOUVEAU CODE CIVIL ET LA RÉFORME DU DROIT DE LA FAMILLE

paru dans La Gazette des femmes, vol. 2, no. 7, février 1981. reproduit avec l'autorisation de La Gazette des femmes

Le 19 décembre dernier, l'Assemblée nationale adoptait le projet de loi 89 instituant un nouveau Code civil et portant réforme du droit de la famille. Cette réforme, attendue depuis fort longtemps, sera en vigueur dès le 1er avril prochain, à l'exception toutefois des parties traitant du divorce qui sont encore de compétence fédérale. Voici quelques points saillants de cette nouvelle loi:

Les conditions requises pour se marier

On ne pourra dorénavant se marier avant d'avoir atteint l'âge de 18 ans. Cependant, une dispense pourra être accordée pour motif sérieux, aux personnes âgées d'au moins 16 ans.

Les droits et devoirs des époux

Les époux assureront ensemble la direction morale et matérielle de la famille, exerceront l'autorité parentale et assureront les tâches qui en découlent.

Chacun des époux conservera, lors de son mariage, ses nom et prénom(s), mais les époux mariés avant le 1er avril 1981 pourront conserver l'usage du nom de leur conjoint, s'ils le désirent.

La résidence familiale

Un époux propriétaire d'une maison unifamiliale ou d'un immeuble de moins de cinq logements qui sert, en tout ou en partie, de résidence familiale, ne pourra vendre, hypothéquer ou louer cette maison ou immeuble sans le consentement de son conjoint. S'il agit sans ce consentement, le conjoint non propriétaire pourra lui intenter une action en dommages et intérets; si une déclaration de résidence familiale a été enregistrée, il pourra faire annuler cette transaction. Lorsque le conjoint non propriétaire fait une déclaration de résidence familiale, il doit en aviser son conjoint sans délai.

L'époux locataire de la résidence familiale ne peut, sans le consentement écrit de son conjoint, sous-louer, céder son bail, ni mettre fin au bail lorsque le locateur a été avisé par l'un ou l'autre des époux, que leur logement servait de résidence familiale. Les futurs baux contiendront une clause à cet effet.

La séparation de corps

La séparation de corps est prononcée lorsque la volonté de vie commune est gravement atteinte. Elle pourra être obtenue par consentement mutuel lorsque les époux soumettront au tribunal un projet d'accord réglant les conséquences de leur séparation.

Le divorce

Le divorce est prononcé lorsque la volonté de maintenir le lien du mariage est irrémédiablement atteinte. Par exemple, lorsque les époux ont vécu

LA LOI 89: cont...

séparés pendant au moins deux ans immédiatement avant la demande de divorce.

Il sera aussi possible de divorcer par consentement mutuel si on a été marié au moins un an, et qu'on soumet au tribunal un projet d'accord fixant les conséquences du divorce.

La pension alimentaire

Le divorce ne donnera plus droit automatiquement à une pension alimentaire, à moins qu'un conjoint puisse prouver qu'il en a besoin. Ce droit de réclamer une pension alimentaire pourra s'exercer jusqu'à deux ans après le jugement de divorce.

La prestation compensatoire

Au moment du divorce, le tribunal pourra accorder une prestation compensatoire à un conjoint, si celui-ci a, par son apport en biens ou en services, contribué à l'enrichissement du patrimoine de l'autre.

Le nom des enfants

Dorénavant, les enfants pourront porter le nom de leur père, celui de leur mère ou un double-nom composé des noms de leurs père et mère. Cependant, le nom ne devra pas avoir plus de deux parties. Les parents d'un enfant mineur qui n'a pas de double-nom à l'heure actuelle, pourront lui en donner un. Ils auront deux ans pour effectuer ce changement.

Enfants légitimes et enfants naturels

Que les enfants soient nés de couples mariés ou non mariés, ils seront désormais sur un pied d'égalité. Les enfants issus de couples non mariés pourront, par exemple, hériter de leurs parents sans que cela soit inscrit dans un testament.

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Please note that the following courses are offered this coming summer.

WOMEN IN POLITICS - a 3-credit university level course (WMNS C392/1) on women in politics, with special emphasis on the contemporary situation in Canada. Topics covered will include: the early women's movement in Canada as a political movement, women and revolutionary movements, women and pacifism, and women and the electoral process in Canada. Some of the issues will include: women's participation in governments (municipal, provincial and federal), women's use and understanding of political power, and identifying political decisions which affect women.

The course will be taught in English by Rose Tekel, lecturer in Women's Studies at Concordia University. The format will include films, lectures and workshops. Reading material will consist mostly of articles, which will be distributed and sold in class. There will be one assignment, which may be written in English or French.

WOMEN AND THE UNIONS - a 3-credit university level course (WMNS C393/1) on women and the unions, with special emphasis on Québec and Ontario. Topics covered will include: the need for unions; women in traditional areas of the work-force (textile, "pink" collar, domestic); women in non-traditional jobs; labour law; and issues such as equal pay, industrial health, etc.

The course will be taught in English by Danielle Dionne, former editor of a number of union papers and translator and animatrice at union seminars. There will be guest lecturers. Assignments may be written in French.

IMAGE ET IDENTITÉ DE LA FEMME: UNE APPROCHE HISTORIQUE - WMNS C290/1 - Ce cours sera donné en français. Dans ce cours , nous tenterons de cerner la condition des femmes de la Renaissance à 1848. Des thèmes tels que la femme et le mariage, la femme et le travail, la femme et l'éducation, les sorcières, seront étudiés. Nos sources de documentation sur la condition des femmes seront de préférence empruntées aux femmes car nous voulons surtout appréhender les images que la femme avait d'elle-même.

WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY - TRES 527/1; THEO C471/1 - This course will examine the images and roles of women as defined in the Christian tradition, as well as the actual roles and lives of Christian women in the history of Christianity. Topics to be discussed will include leadership roles for women in the New Testament period; the ideal of virginity in the writings of the Fathers of the Church; woman in medieval theology; new views of marriage and sexuality in the Reformation period; contemporary "feminist theology" and the ordination of women.

Futher information on the above courses may be obtained by phoning the Institute at 879-8521.

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SANS COMMENTAIRE.....

"WHY MOTHERS PRAY FOR BABY BOYS"

by Mrs. Jefferson Davis

IN Etiquette for All Occasions, ed. Mary E.M. White, Boston, MA., Copyright 1900.

Dr. Schenk, the sex specialist, says that the most astonishing development of his theory is the fact that mothers the world over, nearly without exception, desire sons instead of daughters.

Since Dr. Schenk surprised the scientific world with his claim, he has received hundreds of letters every day from women. These letters have reached the sum of 5,000 so far, and every one expresses a wish for a son. This interests the savant more than any other feature of his investigation.

"Think of 5,000 mothers, not one of whom desires a girl baby," said Dr. Schenk. "This partiality of mothers for sons is by far the most interesting feature of my investigation. No other result of it has so astounded and interested me."

"Why are girl infants unwelcome? I have no theory to meet this remarkable condition."

The root of preference for boys, which marks the man's child welcome, lies far back in the recesses of time, and although civilization and Christianity between them are constantly battling for the helpless little girls, women, the most conservative of conservative classes, still keep a peculiarly warm place in their hearts for the baby boy who is to carry his father's name honorably before the world and be his mother's supporter.

Proverbial philosophy may teach that a "son is a son till he gets him a wife, and a daughter a daughter all the days of her life," but each mother feels that her boy is to be the exception which proves the rule and rejoices greatly when one is born to her.

* * *

Perhaps this utilitarian veiw influences women of all nations more than they know. The normal woman feels the necessity of dependence upon a stronger organization than her own, and unconsciously the mother who glories in her sturdy little boy contemplates as a large part of her joy in him the prospect of his growing up able and willing to defend and maintain the women of the family. The plaint of those who have no sons is constantly, "I have no son to care for my girls; they have no man between the world and them. If I had a son to defend me, I should not be imposed upon as I am."

The depressing cry of a mother bereft of all her sons was: "There is no strong young son's arm upon which I may lean as I go down to my grave."

But there is another and more holy influence that sprang up amid the barbarous instincts of our forefathers. The man child, with the birth of religion, became doubly precious as the household priest, the creature who stood between the family and the god of battles.

* * *

SANS COMMENTAIRE cont.....

It is fortunate that the sex of children cannot be controlled by the arts or preferences of parents, otherwise what woman would willingly condemn her offspring to the sorrows and dangers to which women alone are subjected? Would she not, on the contrary, rather sacrifice her own happiness in their tender companionship to their welfare and pray for a boy instead? In a savage state women are and must continue to be merely auxiliary force, and it is only under the highest civilization, or in the decadence of the nation, that they have precedence over the sex more physically endowed by nature. When women lead, except in moral reform, it is an indication of the decadence of the men of a nation.

Men and women are complement of each other, and it is only when adhering to the duties for which they are fitted by nature that each attains the greatest perfection. Our all-wise Creator established the order and equilibrium of animate as well as inanimate nature, and it would seem that, instead of finite creatures devising means to people communities at will with millions of warriors, without a woman to serve, teach, soften and harmonize the coming generation, mankind should worship and offer thanks to Him who left nothing to chance, but when He "left free the human will," "bound the future fast in fate."

"What use was it," said a father whose sons had all died, "to have made a name, there is no son to uphold it".

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